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Letter dated 13 August 1992 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I wish to express once again the greatest concern and anguish at the reported death of yet another Palestinian detainee in Israeli custody.

The Palestine Human Rights Information Centre (PHRIC), Al-Haq, and the Mandela Institute, in a joint press release issued on 10 August 1992, charged that the Israeli military authorities and Israeli intelligence services, Shin Bet, are responsible for the death of Mustafa Barakat, 23, from Anabta (West Bank), who died in detention and under interrogation in the Tulkarm detention centre on 4 August 1992. The three organizations pointed out that the Shin Bet was in total control of Mr. Barakat's situation and medical care at the time of his death.

While the exact circumstances of Mr. Barakat's death remain unknown, an independent pathologist from the United States-based organization, Physicians for Human Rights, who participated in the autopsy on behalf of the family, has concluded that the death was caused by "an acute attack of asthma, brought about by conditions in detention ... (Mr. Barakat) could have been subjected to severe mistreatment".

As reported in earlier letters to you, mistreatment and torture of Palestinian detainees have been alleged by various human rights organizations. In a recent study of prison conditions by Al-Haq, it was found that 99 per cent of a sample of 234 Palestinians interrogated had been subjected to some form of torture and mistreatment; over 80 per cent were

subjected to hooding and over 91 per cent were subjected to positional abuse, which often includes hooding, handcuffing and being forced into a single position for a prolonged period. Grossly inadequate medical care also contributes to extremely poor prison conditions.

According to the press release mentioned above, Mr. Barakat is the fifth Palestinian to die in detention or from treatment related to detention in 1992. His is the thirtieth death in detention since the beginning of the intifadah.

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I should like to express the gravest concern at the continuing mistreatment of Palestinian detainees in Israeli custody in violation of international standards. The Committee therefore urgently appeals to you and all those concerned, and in particular the Human Rights Committee and the Committee against Torture, which supervise the implementation of the relevant treaties, as well as the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, to take all necessary measures to ensure that Israel desists forthwith from using illegal methods in its treatment of Palestinian detainees and respects its international obligations.

I would appreciate it if this letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 33, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kéba Birane CISSE
Chairman of the
Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People